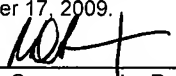


Certificate Under 37 CFR 1.8

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being electronically transmitted to the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, Commissioner for Patents, via the EFS on September 17, 2009.

  
Robert D. Summers, Jr., Reg. No. 57,844

BRINKS  
HOFER  
GILSON  
& LIONE

**IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE**

In re Appln. of: Olivier PELLETIER

Appln. No.: 10/615,157

Filed: July 07, 2003

For: A SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR  
DETERMINING A SCENT OR  
TASTE PROFILE FOR  
PREDICTING A USER  
ADAPTED SCENT OR TASTE

Examiner: ANDERSON, Folashade

Art Unit: 3623

Confirmation No.: 8242

Attorney Docket No: 10022/579

**REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION OF  
PATENT TERM ADJUSTMENT  
PURSUANT TO 37 C.F.R. § 1.705(d)**

Mail Stop Patent Ext  
Commissioner for Patents  
P.O. Box 1450  
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

Dear Sir:

U.S. Patent No. 7,587,331 ("the '331 patent") issued on September 08, 2009. Pursuant to 35 U.S.C. § 154(b), the United States Patent and Trademark Office ("PTO") calculated a patent term adjustment of 1111 days. A copy of the issue notification for the '331 patent is included herewith as Exhibit A.

Assignee believes that the patent term adjustment should be 1746 days. For the reasons stated herein, Assignee respectfully requests reconsideration of this patent term adjustment pursuant to 37 C.F.R. 1.705(d). Please charge the petition fee

pursuant to 37 C.F.R. § 1.18(e) to Deposit Account No. 23-1925. Please charge any additional fee required or credit for any excess fee paid to Deposit Account No. 23-1925.

The PTO calculated the patent term adjustment for the '331 patent based on activities and associated dates detailed in the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system Patent Term Adjustment History, attached as Exhibit B. Assignee believes that errors and/or omissions in the calculation have resulted in an incorrect patent term adjustment for the '331 patent as described in detail below. Pursuant to 37 C.F.R. § 1.705(d), Assignee files this request for reconsideration within two months of the issue date of the '331 patent. Note that the '331 patent is not subject to a terminal disclaimer.

**Period of adjustment pursuant to 37 C.F.R. § 1.703(b)**

The period of adjustment pursuant to 37 C.F.R. § 1.703(b) is the number of days in the period beginning on the day ("the 3 year date") after the date that is three years after the date on which the application was filed pursuant to 35 U.S.C. § 111(a).

The present application was filed on July 07, 2003 as evidenced by the official filing receipt attached as Exhibit C. The 3 year date determined pursuant to 37 C.F.R. § 1.703(b) is July 07, 2006. The PTO issued the '331 patent on September 08, 2009. Assignee respectfully submits that the non-overlapping period of adjustment beyond the 3 year date is 1746 days, under 37 C.F.R. § 1.703(b).

As indicated by the PAIR system Patent Term Adjustment History, attached as Exhibit B, the total delay by the PTO was 1192 days and the total delay by the Assignee was 81 days. Based on those calculations, the PTO calculated the period of adjustment for the present application as 1111 days (i.e., 1192 – 81). However, that period of

adjustment does not take into consideration the additional adjustment due under the 3 year provision of 37 C.F.R. § 1.702(b). See *Wyeth et al. v. Dudas*, 88 USPQ 2d 1538 (D.D.C. 2008) (Exhibit D).

With regard to the 3 year provision, Assignee believes that the non-overlapping period of adjustment pursuant to 37 C.F.R. § 1.703(f) is 1746 days. In particular, there is a period of 1159 days between the 3 year date (July 07, 2006) and the Issue date of the Patent (September 08, 2009), but there also is overlap of 524 days with the 1159 day period. Under 37 C.F.R. § 1.702(b) the non-overlapping period of adjustment with respect to the 3 year provision is  $1159 \text{ days} - 524 \text{ days} = 635 \text{ days}$ . See *id.* The overlap of 524 days corresponds to the number of days between the 3 year date (July 07, 2006) and the mailing date of the first Office Action (December 13, 2007). Accordingly, Assignee respectfully requests that the PTO correct the patent term adjustment to include the 635 days of non-overlapping adjustment.

**Total patent term adjustment**

For the present application, the total patent term adjustment pursuant to 37 C.F.R. § 1.703(f) is the period of adjustment pursuant to 37 C.F.R. § 1.703 reduced by any delay pursuant to 37 C.F.R. § 1.704. Thus, Assignee submits that the patent term adjustment should be  $1111 \text{ days} + 635 \text{ days} = 1746 \text{ days}$ , instead of the 1111 days indicated on the issue notification.

Assignee respectfully asserts that the patent term adjustment determined by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office for U.S. patent number 7,587,331 is not correct. Accordingly, Assignee respectfully requests the U.S. Patent and Trademark office to reconsider the patent term adjustment, and make the above-explained revision to the

Patent No. 7,577,331  
Serial No. 10/615,157

Date Issued: September 08, 2009  
Date Filed: July 07, 2003

patent term adjustment and corresponding changes the PAIR system Patent Term Adjustment History in view of the previous remarks. Office personnel are invited to contact Assignee's representative via telephone if such communication would be beneficial in fulfilling this request.

**BRINKS  
HOFER  
GILSON  
& LIONE**

Respectfully submitted,



Robert D. Summers Jr.  
Registration No. 57,844  
Attorney for Assignee

BRINKS HOFER GILSON & LIONE  
**CUSTOMER NO. 00757**  
Telephone: (312) 321-4200  
Facsimile: (312) 321-4299

# EXHIBIT A



UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
United States Patent and Trademark Office  
Address: COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS  
P.O. Box 1450  
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450  
[www.uspto.gov](http://www.uspto.gov)

APPLICATION NO.	ISSUE DATE	PATENT NO.	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/615,157	09/08/2009	7587331	10022/579	8242

28164 7590 08/19/2009  
ACCENTURE CHICAGO 28164  
BRINKS HOFER GILSON & LIONE  
P O BOX 10395  
CHICAGO, IL 60610

**ISSUE NOTIFICATION**

The projected patent number and issue date are specified above.

**Determination of Patent Term Adjustment under 35 U.S.C. 154 (b)**  
(application filed on or after May 29, 2000)

The Patent Term Adjustment is 1111 day(s). Any patent to issue from the above-identified application will include an indication of the adjustment on the front page.

If a Continued Prosecution Application (CPA) was filed in the above-identified application, the filing date that determines Patent Term Adjustment is the filing date of the most recent CPA.

Applicant will be able to obtain more detailed information by accessing the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) WEB site (<http://pair.uspto.gov>).

Any questions regarding the Patent Term Extension or Adjustment determination should be directed to the Office of Patent Legal Administration at (571)-272-7702. Questions relating to issue and publication fee payments should be directed to the Customer Service Center of the Office of Patent Publication at (571)-272-4200.

APPLICANT(s) (Please see PAIR WEB site <http://pair.uspto.gov> for additional applicants):

Olivier Pelletier, Zurich, SWITZERLAND;

# EXHIBIT B

10/615,157	A SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR DETERMINING A SCENT OR TASTE PROFILE FOR PREDICTING A USER ADAPTED SCENT OR TASTE	09-10-2009::11:58:08
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### Patent Term Adjustments

Patent Term Adjustment (PTA) for Application Number: 10/615,157

Filing or 371(c) Date:	07-07-2003	USPTO Delay (PTO) Delay (days):	1192
Issue Date of Patent:	09-08-2009	Three Years:	-
Pre-Issue Petitions (days):	+0	Applicant Delay (APPL) Delay (days):	81
Post-Issue Petitions (days):	+0	Total PTA (days):	1111
USPTO Adjustment(days):	+0	Explanation Of Calculations	

### Patent Term Adjustment History

Date	Contents Description	PTO(Days)	APPL(Days)
08-19-2009	PTA 36 Months		
09-08-2009	Patent Issue Date Used in PTA Calculation		
08-04-2009	Dispatch to FDC		
08-03-2009	Application Is Considered Ready for Issue		
07-30-2009	Issue Fee Payment Verified		
07-30-2009	Issue Fee Payment Received		
06-04-2009	Mail Notice of Allowance		
06-03-2009	Document Verification		
06-03-2009	Notice of Allowance Data Verification Completed		
05-26-2009	Examiner's Amendment Communication		
05-04-2009	Date Forwarded to Examiner		
04-27-2009	Amendment after Final Rejection		
02-10-2009	Mail Final Rejection (PTOL - 326)		
02-09-2009	Final Rejection		
12-11-2008	Date Forwarded to Examiner		
12-01-2008	Response after Non-Final Action		52
12-01-2008	Request for Extension of Time - Granted		⬆
07-10-2008	Mail Non-Final Rejection		⬆
07-07-2008	Non-Final Rejection		
04-11-2008	Affidavit(s) (Rule 131 or 132) or Exhibit(s) Received		
04-29-2008	Date Forwarded to Examiner		
04-11-2008	Response after Non-Final Action		29
04-11-2008	Request for Extension of Time - Granted		⬆
01-22-2008	Mail Examiner Interview Summary (PTOL - 413)		⬆
01-16-2008	Examiner Interview Summary Record (PTOL - 413)		⬆
12-13-2007	Mail Non-Final Rejection	1192	
12-10-2007	Requirement under Rule 105 Included with Office Action	⬆	
12-10-2007	Non-Final Rejection	⬆	
12-10-2007	Case Docketed to Examiner in GAU	⬆	
11-24-2003	Information Disclosure Statement considered	⬆	
02-07-2005	Information Disclosure Statement considered	⬆	
06-23-2005	Information Disclosure Statement considered	⬆	
10-17-2007	Withdraw Flagged for 5/25	⬆	
10-17-2007	Withdraw Flagged for 5/25	⬆	



10-15-2007	Flagged for 5/25	⬆
10-15-2007	Flagged for 5/25	⬆
10-09-2007	Case Docketed to Examiner in GAU	⬆
08-15-2007	Case Docketed to Examiner in GAU	⬆
08-09-2007	Transfer Inquiry to GAU	⬆
07-06-2007	Case Docketed to Examiner in GAU	⬆
11-13-2006	Case Docketed to Examiner in GAU	⬆
09-12-2006	Case Docketed to Examiner in GAU	⬆
06-27-2006	Case Docketed to Examiner in GAU	⬆
09-28-2005	IFW TSS Processing by Tech Center Complete	⬆
06-23-2005	Miscellaneous Incoming Letter	⬆
10-13-2004	Miscellaneous Incoming Letter	⬆
07-07-2003	Preliminary Amendment	⬆
06-23-2005	Information Disclosure Statement (IDS) Filed	⬆
06-23-2005	Information Disclosure Statement (IDS) Filed	⬆
02-07-2005	Information Disclosure Statement (IDS) Filed	⬆
02-07-2005	Information Disclosure Statement (IDS) Filed	⬆
02-07-2005	Preliminary Amendment	⬆
02-14-2005	Transfer Inquiry to GAU	⬆
02-07-2005	Workflow incoming amendment IFW	⬆
11-08-2004	Correspondence Address Change	⬆
11-09-2004	Change in Power of Attorney (May Include Associate POA)	⬆
11-24-2003	Request for Foreign Priority (Priority Papers May Be Included)	⬆
11-24-2003	Reference capture on IDS	⬆
11-24-2003	Information Disclosure Statement (IDS) Filed	⬆
11-24-2003	Information Disclosure Statement (IDS) Filed	⬆
10-03-2003	Application Return from OIPE	⬆
10-03-2003	Application Return TO OIPE	⬆
10-02-2003	Application Dispatched from OIPE	⬆
10-03-2003	Application Is Now Complete	⬆
09-17-2003	Cleared by OIPE CSR	⬆
09-17-2003	Cleared by OIPE CSR	⬆
07-25-2003	IFW Scan & PACR Auto Security Review	⬆
07-07-2003	Initial Exam Team nn	⬆

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**Close Window**

# EXHIBIT C



## UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
 United States Patent and Trademark Office  
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 P.O. Box 1450  
 Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450  
 www.uspto.gov

APPL NO.	FILING OR 371 (c) DATE	ART UNIT	FIL FEE REC'D	ATTY. DOCKET NO	DRAWINGS	TOT CLMS	IND CLMS
10/615,157	07/07/2003	2857	1192	426882007600	2	13	2

Stephen C. Durant  
 Morrison & Foerster LLP  
 425 Market Street  
 San Francisco, CA 94105-2482

RECEIVED

OCT 6 - 2003

MORRISON &amp; FOERSTER

CONFIRMATION NO. 8242

## FILING RECEIPT



\*OC000000010975885\*

Date Mailed: 10/03/2003

Receipt is acknowledged of this regular Patent Application. It will be considered in its order and you will be notified as to the results of the examination. Be sure to provide the U.S. APPLICATION NUMBER, FILING DATE, NAME OF APPLICANT, and TITLE OF INVENTION when inquiring about this application. Fees transmitted by check or draft are subject to collection. Please verify the accuracy of the data presented on this receipt. If an error is noted on this Filing Receipt, please write to the Office of Initial Patent Examination's Filing Receipt Corrections, facsimile number 703-746-9195. Please provide a copy of this Filing Receipt with the changes noted thereon. If you received a "Notice to File Missing Parts" for this application, please submit any corrections to this Filing Receipt with your reply to the Notice. When the USPTO processes the reply to the Notice, the USPTO will generate another Filing Receipt incorporating the requested corrections (if appropriate).

## Applicant(s)

Olivier Pelletier, Zurich, SWITZERLAND;

## Domestic Priority data as claimed by applicant

## Foreign Applications

EUROPEAN PATENT OFFICE (EPO) 02354109.7 07/12/2002

If Required, Foreign Filing License Granted: 10/02/2003

Projected Publication Date: 01/15/2004

Non-Publication Request: No

Early Publication Request: No

## Title

Determining a scent or taste profile for predicting a user adapted scent or taste

## Preliminary Class

702

DOCKETED

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**LICENSE FOR FOREIGN FILING UNDER  
Title 35, United States Code, Section 184  
Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, 5.11 & 5.15**

**GRANTED**

The applicant has been granted a license under 35 U.S.C. 184, if the phrase "IF REQUIRED, FOREIGN FILING LICENSE GRANTED" followed by a date appears on this form. Such licenses are issued in all applications where the conditions for issuance of a license have been met, regardless of whether or not a license may be required as set forth in 37 CFR 5.15. The scope and limitations of this license are set forth in 37 CFR 5.15(a) unless an earlier license has been issued under 37 CFR 5.15(b). The license is subject to revocation upon written notification. The date indicated is the effective date of the license, unless an earlier license of similar scope has been granted under 37 CFR 5.13 or 5.14.

This license is to be retained by the licensee and may be used at any time on or after the effective date thereof unless it is revoked. This license is automatically transferred to any related applications(s) filed under 37 CFR 1.53(d). This license is not retroactive.

The grant of a license does not in any way lessen the responsibility of a licensee for the security of the subject matter as imposed by any Government contract or the provisions of existing laws relating to espionage and the national security or the export of technical data. Licensees should apprise themselves of current regulations especially with respect to certain countries, of other agencies, particularly the Office of Defense Trade Controls, Department of State (with respect to Arms, Munitions and Implements of War (22 CFR 121-128)); the Office of Export Administration, Department of Commerce (15 CFR 370.10 (j)); the Office of Foreign Assets Control, Department of Treasury (31 CFR Parts 500+) and the Department of Energy.

**NOT GRANTED**

No license under 35 U.S.C. 184 has been granted at this time, if the phrase "IF REQUIRED, FOREIGN FILING LICENSE GRANTED" DOES NOT appear on this form. Applicant may still petition for a license under 37 CFR 5.12, if a license is desired before the expiration of 6 months from the filing date of the application. If 6 months has lapsed from the filing date of this application and the licensee has not received any indication of a secrecy order under 35 U.S.C. 181, the licensee may foreign file the application pursuant to 37 CFR 5.15(b).

# EXHIBIT D



## Intellectual Property Library

Source: USPQ, 2d Series (1986 - Present) > U.S. District Courts, District of Columbia > Wyeth v. Dudas, 88 USPQ2d 1538 (D.D.C. 2008)

**88 USPQ2d 1538**  
**Wyeth v. Dudas**  
**U.S. District Court**  
**District of Columbia**

No. 07-1492 (JR)

Decided September 30, 2008

### Headnotes

#### PATENTS

[1] Patent grant— Patent term extension; restoration (►105.17)

#### JUDICIAL PRACTICE AND PROCEDURE

Procedure — Judicial review — Standard of review — Patents (►410.4607.09)

U.S. Patent and Trademark Office's interpretation of 35 U.S.C. §154(b)(2)(A), which states that, to extent periods of delay in issuance of patent attributable to grounds specified in Section 154(b) overlap, period of patent term adjustment shall not exceed actual number of days issuance of patent was delayed, is not entitled to wide deference in accordance with *Chevron U.S.A. Inc. v. Natural Resources Defense Council Inc.*, 467 U.S. 837 (1984), since Section 154(b)(3)(A) states that authority of PTO is limited to prescribing "regulations establishing procedures for the application for and determination of patent term adjustments under this subsection," and PTO thus has not been granted power to elaborate on meaning of Section 154(b)(2)(A).

#### PATENTS

[2] Patent grant— Patent term extension; restoration (►105.17)

Practice and procedure in Patent and Trademark Office — Prosecution — Rules and rules practice (►110.0905)

Provisions of 35 U.S.C. §154(b)(2)(A), which state that, to extent periods of delay in issuance of patent attributable to grounds specified in Section 154(b) overlap, period of patent term adjustment shall not exceed actual number of days issuance of patent was delayed, have been improperly construed by U.S. Patent and Trademark Office to mean that period of delay under Section 154(b)(1)(B) runs from filing date of application, such that period of "B delay" always overlaps with any period of delay under Section 154(b)(1)(A), since language of statute provides that period of "B delay" begins when PTO has failed to issue patent within three years after filing date of application, not before, and since interpretation of statute must square with language therein, even if doing so may lead to "windfall" extensions of patent term.

#### Case History and Disposition

Action by Wyeth and Eian Pharma International Ltd. against Jon W. Dudas, in his capacity as Under Secretary of Commerce for Intellectual Property and Director of U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, challenging PTO's interpretation of 35 U.S.C. §154(b), which governs adjustments to length of patent term. PTO is held to have improperly construed statute.

#### Attorneys

David O. Bickart, of Kaye Scholer, Washington, D.C.; Patricia A. Carson, of Kaye Scholer, New York, N.Y., for plaintiffs.

Fred Elmore Haynes, U.S. attorney's office, Washington, for defendant.

## Opinion Text

### Opinion By:

Robertson, J.

Plaintiffs here take issue with the interpretation that the United States Patent and Trademark Office (PTO) has imposed upon 35 U.S.C. §154, the statute that prescribes patent terms. Section 154(a)(2) establishes a term of 20 years from the day on which a successful patent application is first filed. Because the

Page 1539

clock begins to run on this filing date, and not on the day the patent is actually granted, some of the effective term of a patent is consumed by the time it takes to prosecute the application. To mitigate the damage that bureaucracy can do to inventors, the statute grants extensions of patent terms for certain specified kinds of PTO delay, 35 U.S.C. §154(b)(1)(A), and, regardless of the reason, whenever the patent prosecution takes more than three years, 35 U.S.C. §154(b)(1)(B). Recognizing that the protection provided by these separate guarantees might overlap, Congress has forbidden double-counting: "To the extent that periods of delay attributable to grounds specified in paragraph (1) overlap, the period of any adjustment granted under this subsection shall not exceed the actual number of days the issuance of the patent was delayed." 35 U.S.C. §154(b)(2)(A). Plaintiffs claim that the PTO has misconstrued or misapplied this provision, and that the PTO is denying them a portion of the term Congress has provided for the protection of their intellectual property rights.

### Statutory Scheme

Until 1994, patent terms were 17 years from the date of issuance. See 35 U.S.C. §154 (1992) ("Every patent shall contain ... a grant ... for the term of seventeen years ... of the right to exclude others from making, using, or selling the invention throughout the United States..."). In 1994, in order to comply with treaty obligations under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the statute was amended to provide a 20-year term from the date on which the application is first filed. See Pub. L. No. 103-465, §532, 108 Stat. 4809, 4984 (1994). In 1999, concerned that extended prosecution delays could deny inventors substantial portions of their effective patent terms under the new regime, Congress enacted the American Inventors Protection Act, a portion of which -- referred to as the Patent Term Guarantee Act of 1999 -- provided for the adjustments that are at issue in this case. Pub. L. No. 106-113, §§4401-4402, 113 Stat. 1501, 1501A-557 (1999).

As currently codified, 35 U.S.C. §154(b) provides three guarantees of patent term, two of which are at issue here. The first is found in subsection (b)(1)(A); the "[g]uarantee of prompt Patent and Trademark Office response." It provides a one-day extension of patent term for every day that issuance of a patent is delayed by a failure of the PTO to comply with various enumerated statutory deadlines: fourteen months for a first office action; four months to respond to a reply; four months to issue a patent after the fee is paid; and the like. See 35 U.S.C. §154(b)(1)(A)(i)-(iv). Periods of delay that fit under this provision are called "A delays" or "A periods." The second provision is the "[g]uarantee of no more than 3-year application pendency." Under this provision, a one-day term extension is granted for every day greater than three years after the filing date that it takes for the patent to issue, regardless of whether the delay is the fault of the PTO.<sup>1</sup> See 35 U.S.C. §154(b)(1)(B). The period that begins after the three-year window has closed is referred to as the "B delay" or the "B period". ("C delays," delays resulting from interferences, secrecy orders, and appeals, are similarly treated but were not involved in the patent applications underlying this suit.)

---

<sup>1</sup> Certain reasons for exceeding the three-year pendency period are excluded, see 35 U.S.C. §154(b)(1)(b)(i)-(iii), as are periods attributable to the applicant's own delay. See 35 U.S.C. §154(b)(2)(C).

---

The extensions granted for A, B, and C delays are subject to the following limitation:

(A) *In general.*—To the extent that periods of delay attributable to grounds specified in paragraph (1) overlap, the period of any adjustment granted under this subsection shall not exceed the actual number of days the issuance of the patent was delayed.

35 U.S.C. §154(b)(2)(A). This provision is manifestly intended to prevent double-counting of periods of delay, but understanding that intent does not answer the question of what is double-counting and

what is not. Proper interpretation of this proscription against windfall extensions requires an assessment of what it means for "periods of delay" to "overlap."

The PTO, pursuant to its power under 35 U.S.C. §154(b)(3)(A) to "prescribe regulations establishing procedures for the application for and determination of patent term adjustments," has issued final rules and an "explanation" of the rules, setting forth its authoritative construction of the double-counting provision. The rules that the PTO has promulgated essentially parrot the statutory text, see 37 C.F.R. §1.703(f), and so the real interpretive act is found in something the PTO calls its Explanation of 37 CFR 1.703(f) and of the United States Patent and Trademark Office Interpretation of 35 U.S.C. §154(b)(2)(A), which was published on June 21, 2004, at 69

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Fed. Reg. 34238. Here, the PTO "explained" that:

the Office has consistently taken the position that if an application is entitled to an adjustment under the three-year pendency provision of 35 U.S.C. §154(b)(1)(B), *the entire period during which the application was pending before the Office* (except for periods excluded under 35 U.S.C. §154(b)(1)(B) (i)-(iii)), and not just the period beginning three years after the actual filing date of the application, *is the relevant period under 35 U.S.C. §154(b)(1)(B) in determining whether periods of delay "overlap" under 35 U.S.C. 154(b)(2)(A).*

69 Fed. Reg. 34238 (2004) (emphasis added). In short, the PTO's view is that any administrative delay under §154(b)(1)(A) overlaps any 3-year maximum pendency delay under §154(b)(1)(B): the applicant gets credit for "A delay" or for "B delay," whichever is larger, but never A + B.

In the plaintiffs' submission, this interpretation does not square with the language of the statute. They argue that the "A period" and "B period" overlap only if they occur on the same calendar day or days. Consider this example, proffered by plaintiff: A patent application is filed on 1/1/02. The patent issues on 1/1/08, six years later. In that six-year period are two "A periods," each one year long: (1) the 14-month deadline for first office action is 3/1/03, but the first office action does not occur until 3/1/04, one year late; (2) the 4-month deadline for patent issuance after payment of the issuance fee is 1/1/07, but the patent does not issue until 1/1/08, another year of delay attributable to the PTO. According to plaintiff, the "B period" begins running on 1/1/05, three years after the patent application was filed, and ends three years later, with the issuance of the patent on 1/1/08. In this example, then, the first "A period" does not overlap the "B period," because it occurs in 2003-04, not in 2005-07. The second "A period," which covers 365 of the same days covered by the "B period," does overlap. Thus, in plaintiff's submission, this patent holder is entitled to four years of adjustment (one year of "A period" delay + three years of "B period" delay). But in the PTO's view, since "the entire period during which the application was pending before the office" is considered to be "B period" for purposes of identifying "overlap," the patent holder gets only three years of adjustment.

#### **Chevron Deference**

We must first decide whether the PTO's interpretation is entitled to deference under *Chevron v. NRDC*, 467 U.S. 837 (1984). No, the plaintiffs argue, because, under the Supreme Court's holdings in *Gonzales v. Oregon*, 546 U.S. 243 (2006), and *United States v. Mead Corp.*, 533 U.S. 218 (2001), Congress has not "delegated authority to the agency generally to make rules carrying the force of law," and in any case the interpretation at issue here was not promulgated pursuant to any such authority. See *Gonzales*, 546 U.S. at 255-56, citing *Mead*, 533 U.S. at 226-27. Since at least 1996, the Federal Circuit has held that the PTO is not afforded *Chevron* deference because it does not have the authority to issue substantive rules, only procedural regulations regarding the conduct of proceedings before the agency. See *Merck & Co. v. Kessler*, 80 F.3d 1543, 1549-50 [38 USPQ2d 1347] (Fed. Cir. 1996).

[ 1 ] Here, as in *Merck*, the authority of the PTO is limited to prescribing "regulations establishing procedures for the application for and determination of patent term adjustments under this subsection." 35 U.S.C. §154(b)(3)(A) (emphasis added). Indeed, a comparison of this rulemaking authority with the authority conferred for a different purpose in the immediately preceding section of the statute makes it clear that the PTO's authority to interpret the overlap provision is quite limited. In 35 U.S.C. §154(b)(2)(C)(iii) the PTO is given the power to "prescribe regulations establishing the circumstances that constitute a failure of an applicant to engage in reasonable efforts to conclude processing or examination of an application" (emphasis added) -- that is, the power to elaborate on the meaning of a particular statutory term. No such power is granted under §154(b)(3)(A). *Chevron*



deference does not apply to the interpretation at issue here.

### **Statutory Construction**

*Chevron* would not save the PTO's interpretation, however, because it cannot be reconciled with the plain text of the statute. If the statutory text is not ambiguous enough to permit the construction that the agency urges, that construction fails at *Chevron*'s "step one," without regard to whether it is a reasonable attempt to reach a result that Congress might have intended. See, e.g., *MCI v. AT&T*, 512 U.S. 218, 229 (1994) ("[A]n agency's interpretation of a statute is not entitled to deference

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when it goes beyond the meaning that the statute can bear.").

[ 2 ] The operative question under 35 U.S.C. §154(b)(2)(A) is whether "periods of delay attributable to grounds specified in paragraph (1) overlap." The only way that periods of time can "overlap" is if they occur on the same day. If an "A delay" occurs on one calendar day and a "B delay" occurs on another, they do not overlap, and §154(b)(2)(A) does not limit the extension to one day. Recognizing this, the PTO defends its interpretation as essentially running the "period of delay" under subsection (B) from the filing date of the patent application, such that a period of "B delay" *always overlaps* with any periods of "A delay" for the purposes of applying §154(b)(2)(A).

The problem with the PTO's construction is that it considers the application *delayed* under §154(b)(1)(B) during the period *before it has been delayed*. That construction cannot be squared with the language of §154(b)(1)(B), which applies "if the issue of an original patent is *delayed* due to the failure of the United States Patent and Trademark Office to issue a patent within 3 years." (Emphasis added.) "B delay" begins when the PTO has failed to issue a patent within three years, not before.

The PTO's interpretation appears to be driven by Congress's admonition that any term extension "not exceed the actual number of days the issuance of the patent was delayed," and by the PTO's view that "A delays" during the first three years of an applications' pendency inevitably lead to "B delays" in later years. Thus, as the PTO sees it, if plaintiffs' construction is adopted, one cause of delay will be counted twice: once because the PTO has failed to meet an administrative deadline, and again because that failure has pushed back the entire processing of the application into the "B period." Indeed, in the example set forth above, plaintiffs' calendar-day construction does result in a total effective patent term of 18 years under the (B) guarantee, so that — again from the PTO's viewpoint — the applicant is not "compensated" for the PTO's administrative delay, he is benefitted by it.

But if subsection (B) had been intended to guarantee a 17-year patent term and *no more*, it could easily have been written that way. It is true that the legislative context — as distinct from the legislative history — suggests that Congress may have intended to use subsection (B) to guarantee the 17-year term provided before GATT. But it chose to write a "[g]uarantee of no more than 3-year application pendency," 35 U.S.C. §154(b)(1)(B), not merely a guarantee of 17 effective years of patent term, and do so using language separating that guarantee from a different promise of prompt administration in subsection (A). The PTO's efforts to prevent windfall extensions may be reasonable — they may even be consistent with Congress's intent — but its interpretation must square with Congress's words. If the outcome commanded by that text is an unintended result, the problem is for Congress to remedy, not the agency.

- End of Case -

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